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POEMS.

BY

RICHARD HENRY STODDARD.

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TICKNOR, REED, AND FIELDS.
M DCCC LII.

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THESE POEMS

ARE DEDICATED TO MY FRIEND,

BAYARD TAYLOR,

WHOM I ADMIRE AS A POET,

AND LOVE AS A MAN.

R. H. S.

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POEMS.

THE CASTLE IN THE AIR.

I.

We have two lives about us,
Two worlds in which we dwell;
Within us, and without us,
Alternate Heaven and Hell:
Without, the sombre Real,
Within our heart of hearts, the beautiful Ideal!
I stand between the portals of the two,
Fettered and cramped with many a heavy chain,
Whose links I strive to rend, but all in vain,
So strong the False that holds me from the True;
In dreams alone my spirit wanders o'er
The starry threshold of the world of bliss,
And lives the life that Fate denies in this,
Which may have once been mine, but will be — nevermore!

II.

My Castle stands alone,
In some delicious clime,
Away from Earth and Time,
In Fancy's tropic zone,
Beneath its summer skies,
Where all the livelong year the summer never dies!
A stately marble pile, whose pillars rise
From sculptured bases, fluted to the dome,
With wreathèd friezes crowned, and rare device
Of carven leaves like pendant drifts of foam;
A thousand windows front the rising sun,
Deep-set between the columns, many paned,
Tri-arched, emblazoned, gorgeously stained,
Crimson and purple, green and blue and dun,
And all their wedded colors fall below,
Like rainbows shattered on a field of snow.
Before the Castle lies a shaven lawn,
Sloping and sparkling in the dews of dawn,
With turfy terraces, and garden bowers
Where rows of slender urns are full of flowers;
Broad oaks o'erarch the winding avenues
Edged round with evergreens of fadeless bloom,
And pour a thousand intermingling hues,
A misty flood of green and golden gloom:
Far-seen through twinkling leaves,

The fountains gush aloft like silver sheaves,
Drooping with shining ears, and crests of spray,
And foamy tassels blowing every way,
Shaking in marble basins, white and cold,
A drainless beaded shower of diamond grain,
Which winnows off in sun-illumined rain
Its dusty chaff, a cloud of misty gold;
And snowy swans are floating round the tide,
Through beds of bowing lilies chaste and white,
Like virgin queens in soft disdain and pride
Sweeping amid their maids with trains of light.
A little herd of deer, with startled looks,
In quiet parks within whose shade they browse,
Drink from the lucid brooks,
Their antlers mirrored with the tangled boughs.
My rivers flow beyond, with guardant ranks
Of silver-liveried poplars on their banks;
And barges rock along the grassy piers,
With gilded pennons blown from side to side;
And bridges span the waves with arches wide,
Their stony 'butments mossed and gray with years;
Then comes a dreamy range of hazy bowers,
With rounded hills, and hollow vales between,
And folded lawns in everlasting green;—
And then a line of palaces and towers,
That lessen on till mountains bar the view,
Shooting their jagged peaks sublimely up the blue!

III.

I stroll along the walks
With sandals wetted through,
From dripping flowers and stalks
That fringe the avenue ;
My broidered mantle twice begemmed with dropping dew!
Then up an echoing colonnade I go,
With shadowy pillars ranged athwart the light,
Then climb a flight of stairs, ascending slow,
Then through a porch, and through a portal bright,
And I am in my Castle, lord of all,
Reflected gaily o'er its polished floor,
With grooms and pages hurrying at my call,
And cringing chamberlains at every door,
Who wave their wands and wait
To bow me on my way in royal pomp and state!

IV.

My chamber lies apart,
The Castle's very heart,
And all things rich and rare,
From land, and sea, and air,
Are lavished with a wild and waste profusion there!
The carpeting was woven in Turkish looms,
From softest wool of fine Circassian sheep,
Tufted like springy moss in forests deep,

Illuminate with all its autumn blooms;
The antique chairs are made of cedar-trees,
Felled on the lofty peaks of Lebanon,
Veined with the rings of vanished centuries,
And touched with frost and sun;
Sofas and couches, stuffed with cygnet's fleece,
Loll round, inviting dreaminess and ease;
The gorgeous window-curtains, damask-red,
Suspended, silver-ringed, on bars of gold,
Droop heavily, in many a fluted fold,
And, rounding outward, intercept and shed
The prisoned daylight o'er the slumberous room,
In streams of rosy dimness, purple gloom;
Hard by are cabinets of curious shells,
Twisted and jointed, hornèd, wreathed, and curled,
And some like moons in rainbow mist impearled,
With coral boughs from ocean's deepest cells;
Cases of rare medallions, coins antique,
Found in the dust of cities, Roman, Greek;
And urns of alabaster, soft and bright,
With fauns and dancing shepherds on their sides;
And costly marble vases dug from night
In Pompeii, beneath its lava-tides:
Clusters of arms, the spoil of ancient wars,
Old scymitars of true Damascus brand,
Short swords with basket hilts to guard the hand,

And iron casques with rusty visor-bars ;
Lances, and spears, and battle-axes keen,
With crescent edges, shields with studded thorns,
Yew bows, and shafts, and curvèd bugle-horns
With tasselled baldricks of the Lincoln green :
And on the walls with lifted curtains, see !
The portraits of my noble ancestry ;
Thin-featured, stately dames with powdered locks,
And courtly shepherdesses tending flocks,
Stiff lords in wigs, and ruffles white as snow,
Haught peers, and princes centuries ago,
And dark Sir Hugh, the bravest of the line,
With all the knightly scars he won in Palestine !

v.

My gallery sleeps aloof,
Soft-lighted through the roof,
Enshrining pictures old,
And statues pure and cold,
The gems of Art, when Art was in her Age of Gold !
Not picked from any single age or clime,
Nor one peculiar master, school, or tone ;
Select of all, the best of all alone,
The garnered excellence of Earth and Time :
Food for all thoughts and fancies, grave or gay ;
Suggestive of old lore, and poets' themes ;

These filled with shapes of waking life and day,
And those with spirits, and the world of dreams.
Let me draw back the curtains, one by one,
And give their muffled brightness to the sun:

THE PICTURES.

Helen and Paris on their bridal night,
Under the swinging cressets' starry light,
With hoary Priam and his sons around,
Feasting in all their majesty and bloom,
Filling their golden cups with eager hands,
To drink a health, while pale Cassandra stands
In prophecy, with raven locks unbound,
Her soul o'ershadowed by the coming doom.

Andromache, with all her tearful charms,
Folded upon the mighty Hector's breast,
And the babe shrinking in its Nurse's arms,
Affrightened by the nodding of his crest.

The giant Cyclops, sitting in his cave,
Helped by divine Ulysses, old and wise,
Spilling the wine in rivers down his beard,
While swart Silenus, sly and cunning knave,
Leers o'er his shoulder, reassured and cheered,
Stealing a swollen skin with twinkling eyes.

Anacreon, lolling in the myrtle shades,
Bibbing his Teian draughts with rich delight,
Pledging the dancing girls and Cyprian maids,
Pinching their little ears, and shoulders white.

A cloudless sunrise on the glittering Nile,
Gilding the Sphinx and temples on the shore,
And robèd priests, that toss their censers, while,
Abased in dust, the populace adore;
A beakèd galley fretting at its curb,
With reedy oars, and masts, and silken sails,
And Cleopatra walks the deck superb,
Slow-followed by her court in shining veils.

The Virgin Mother, and the Holy Child,
Holding a globe and sceptre, sweet and mild;
The Magi bring their gifts with reverend looks,
And the rapt Shepherds lean upon their crooks.

A courtly summer fête in shady bowers;
Bowing gallants, with plumèd caps in hand,
And ladies with guitars on banks of flowers,
And merry rustics dancing in a band.

A bleak defile, a pass in mountains deep,
Whose whitened summits wear their morning glow,

And dark banditti winding down the steep
Of shelvy rocks, pointing their guns below.

A harvest scene, a vineyard on the Rhine;
Arbors, and wreathèd screens, and laughing swains
Pouring their crowded baskets into wains,
And vats, and trodden presses gushing wine.

A Flemish Tavern: boors and burghers hale
Drawn round a table, o'er a board of chess,
Smoking their heavy pipes, and drinking ale,
Blowing from tankard brims the frothiness.

A picture of Cathay, a justice scene;
Pagodas, statues, and a group around,
And, in his sedan chair, the Mandarin,
Reading the scroll of laws to prisoners bound,
Bambooed with canes, and writhing on the ground.
And many more whose veils I will undraw
Some other day, exceeding rare and fine;
And statues of the Grecian gods divine,
In all their various moods of love and awe:
The Phidian Jove, with calm, creative face,
Broodingin thought above the deeps of Space;
Imperial Juno, Mercury wingèd-heeled,
Lit with a message, Mars with helm and shield,

Apollo with the discus, bent to throw,
The piping Pan, and Dian with her bow,
And Cytherea just risen from the swell
Of crudded foam, half-stooping on her knee,
Wringing her dripping tresses in the sea,
Whose loving billows climb the curvèd shell
Tumultuously, and o'er its edges flow,
And kiss with pallid lips her nakedness of snow!

VI.

My books may lie and mould,
However rare and old;
I cannot read to-day.
Away with books, away!
Full-fed with sweets of sense,
I sink upon my couch in honeyed indolence!
Here are rich salvers full of nectarines,
Dead-ripe pomegranates, and Arabian dates,
Peaches and plums, and clusters fresh from vines,
And all imaginable sweets, and cates;
And here are drinking-cups, and long-necked flasks
In wicker mail, and bottles broached from casks
In cellars delvèd deep, and winter-cold,
Select, superlative, and centuries old.
What more can I desire? what book can be
As rich as Idleness and Luxury?

What lore can fill my heart with joy divine,
Like luscious fruitage, and enchanted wine?
Brimming with Helicon I dash the cup:
Why should I waste my years in hoarding up
The thoughts of eld? Let dust to dust return:
No more for me, — my heart is not an urn!
I will no longer sip from little flasks,
Covered with damp and mould, when Nature yields
A riper growth, from later vintage-fields;
Nor peer at Beauty, dimmed with mortal masks,
When I at will may have them all withdrawn,
And freely gaze in her transfigured face;
Nor limp in fetters in a weary race,
When I may fly unbound, like Mercury's fawn;
No more contented with the sweets of old,
Albeit embalmed in nectar, since the trees,
The Eden bowers, the rich Hesperides,
Still droop around my path, with living fruits of gold!

VII.

O, what a life is mine!
A life of light and mirth,
The sensuous life of Earth,
For ever fresh and fine,
A heavenly worldliness, mortality divine!
When eastern skies, the sea, and misty plain

Illumined slowly, doff their nightly shrouds,
And Heaven's bright archer Morn begins to rain
His golden arrows through the banded clouds,
I rise and tramp away the jocund hours,
Knee-deep in dewy grass, and beds of flowers;
I race my eager greyhound on the hills,
And climb with bounding feet the craggy steeps,
Peak-lifted, gazing down the cloven deeps,
Where mighty rivers shrink to threaded rills;
The ramparts of the mountains loom around,
Like splintered fragments of a ruined world;
The cliff-bound dashing cataracts, downward hurled
In thunderous volumes, shake the chasms profound;
The imperial eagle with a dauntless eye
Wheels round the sun, the monarch of the sky;
I pluck his eyrie in the blasted wood
Of ragged pines, and when the vulture screams,
I track its flight along the solitude,
Like some dark spirit in the world of dreams!
When Noon in golden armor, travel-spent,
Climbing the azure plains of Heaven, alone,
Draws back the curtains of his cloudy tent,
And looks o'er Nature from his burning throne,
I loose my little shallop from its quay,
And down the winding stream it slowly floats,
The while I steer in many a cove and bay,

Where birds are warbling with melodious throats ;
I listen to the humming of the bees,
The water's flow, the winds, the wavy trees,
Then take my lute, and touch its silver chords,
And set the Summer's melody to words ;
Sometimes I rove beside the lonely shore,
Margined and flanked by slanting shelvy ledges,
Bastioned by old gray rocks with dripping edges,
And caverns echoing Ocean's sullen roar ;
Threading the bladdery weeds and paven shells,
Beyond the line of foam, the jewelled chain,
The largesse of the ever-giving main,
Tossed at the feet of Earth with surgy swells,
I plunge into the waves, and strike away,
Breasting with vigorous strokes the snowy spray ;
Sometimes I lounge in arbors hung with vines,
And press the bunchy grapes in various wines,
The which I sip, and sip, with pleasure mute,
O'er mouthful bites of golden-rinded fruit,
Parting their separate flavors, bliss by bliss,
Like one who swoons in some immortal kiss !
When Evening comes, I lie in dreamy rest,
Where lifted casements front the glowing west,
And watch the clouds, like banners wide unfurled,
Hung o'er the flaming threshold of the world :
Its mission done, the holy Day recedes,

Borne Heavenward in its car, with fiery steeds,
Leaving behind a lingering flush of light,
Its mantle fallen at the feet of Night;
The flocks are penned, the earth is growing dim,
The moon comes rounding up the welkin's rim,
Glowing through thinnest mist, an argent shell,
Washed from the caves of darkness on a swell;
One after one the stars begin to shine
In drifted beds, like pearls through shallow brine;
And lo! through clouds that part before the chase
Of silent winds — a belt of milky white,
The Galaxy, a crested surge of light,
A reef of worlds along the sea of Space:
I hear my sweet musicians far withdrawn,
Below my wreathèd lattice, on the lawn,
With harp, and lute, and lyre,
And passionate voices full of tears and fire,
And envious nightingales with rich disdain
Filling the pauses of the languid strain;
My soul is tranced and bound,
Drifting along the magic sea of sound,
Driven in a bark of bliss from deep to deep,
And piloted at last into the ports of Sleep!

VIII.

Nor only this, though this
Might seal a life of bliss,

But something more divine,
For which I once did pine,
The crown of worlds above,
The heart of every heart, the Soul of Being, — Love!
I bow obedient to my Lady's sway,
The sovereignty that won my soul of yore,
And linger in her presence night and day,
And feel a heaven around her evermore;
I sit beside her couch in chambers lone,
And oft unbraid, and lay her locks apart,
And take her taper fingers in my own,
And press them to my lips with leaps of heart:
Sometimes I kneel to her with cups of wine,
With pleading eyes, beseeching her to taste,
And when she sips thereof, I clasp her waist,
And kiss her budding mouth that answers mine
With long-delaying lips, and shake her curls,
And in her coy despite unloose her zone of pearls!
I live for Love, for Love alone, and who
Dare chide me for it? who dare call it folly?
It is a holy thing, if aught is holy,
And true indeed, if Truth herself is true:
Earth yearns for earth, its sensuous life is dear;
Mortals should love mortality while here,
And seize the glowing hours before they fly:

And eyes should answer eyes, and lips should meet,
And hearts enlocked to kindred hearts should beat,
Till all that live on earth in love should live, and die!

IX.

My dear and gentle wife,
The Angel of my life,
Who stirs its deepest springs,
Has folded up her wings,
And lies in slumber deep,
Like some divinest Dream upon the couch of Sleep!
Nor sound nor stir profanes the stilly room,
Haunted by Sleep and Silence, linkèd pair;
The very light itself muffled in gloom
Steals in, and melts into the enamored air
Where Love doth brood and dream, while Passion dies,
Breathing his soul out in a mist of sighs!
Lo! where she lies behind the curtains white,
Pillowed on clouds of down, — her golden hair
Braided around her forehead smooth and fair,
Like a celestial diadem of light:
Her soft, voluptuous lips are drawn apart,
Curving in fine repose and maiden pride;
Her creamy breast — its mantle brushed aside —
Betrays the slow pulsation of her heart:

One languid arm rests on the coverlid,
And one beneath the crumpled sheets is hid,
(Ah happy sheets! to hide an arm so sweet!)
Nor all concealed amid their folds of snow
The soft perfection of her shape below,
Rounded, and tapering to her little feet!
O Love! if Beauty ever left her sphere,
And sovereign sisters Art and Poesy,
Moulded in loveliness she slumbers here,
Slumbers, dear love, in thee!
It is thy smile that makes the chamber still;
It is thy breath that fills the scented air;
The light around is borrowed from thy hair,
And all things else are subject to thy will,
And I am so bewildered in this deep,
Ambrosial calm, and drowsy atmosphere,
I know not whether I am dreaming here,
Or in the world of Sleep!

x.

My eyes are full of tears,
My heart is full of pain,
To wake, as now, again,
And walk, as in my youth, the wilderness of Years!
No more! no more! the autumn winds are loud
In stormy passes, howling to the Night:

Behind a cloud the moon doth veil her light,
And the rain pours from out the hornèd cloud;
And hark! the solemn and mysterious bell,
Swinging its brazen echoes o'er the wave:
Not mortal hands, but spirits, ring the knell,
And toll the parting ghost of Midnight to its grave!
Miserere mei!
Alone in utter woe!

ARCADIAN HYMN TO FLORA.

Come, all ye virgins fair, in kirtles white,
Ye debonair and merry-hearted maids,
Who have been out in troops before the light,
And gathered blossoms in the dewy shades :
The footprints of the fiery-sandalled Day
Are glowing in the east like kindling coals,
The clouds are golden-rimmed like burning scrolls,
And in the west the darkness melts away :
The shrine is wreathed with leaves, the holy urns
Brimming with morning dew are laid thereby ;
The censers swing, the odorous incense burns,
And floats in misty volumes up the sky ;
Lay down your garlands, and your baskets trim,
Heaped up with floral offerings to the brim,
And knit your snowy hands, and trip away
With light and nimble feet,
To music soft and sweet,

And celebrate the joyous break of day,
And sing a hymn to Flora, Queen of May!

O Flora! sweetest Flora, goddess bright,
  Impersonation of selectest things,
  The soul and spirit of a thousand Springs,
Bodied in all their loveliness and light,
A delicate creation of the mind,
  Fashioned in its divinest, daintiest mould,
  In the bright age of gold,
Before the world was wholly lost and blind,
But saw and entertained with thankful heart
  The gods as guests, — O Flora! goddess dear,
Immaculate, immortal as thou art,
  Thou wert a maiden once, like any here;
And thou didst tend thy flowers with proper care,
And shield them from the sun, and chilly air,
Wetting thy little sandals through and through,
As is the wont of maids, in morning dew,
Roving among the urns, and mossy pots,
About the hedges, and the garden plots,
Straightening and binding up the drooping stalks
That kissed thy sweeping garments in the walks,
Setting thy dibble deep, and sowing seeds,
And careful-handed plucking out the weeds, —
Not more divine than we this vernal morn,

Till Zephyr saw thee in the dews of May; —
Flying behind the chariot of the Day,
With love and grief forlorn,
Sighing the while amid the laughing Hours,
Pining for something bright which haunted him,
Sleeping on beds of flowers in arbors dim,
Breaking his tender heart with love extreme,
He saw thee on the earth amid thy flowers,
The spirit of his dream!
Entranced with passionate love he called the Air,
And melting softly in the sunny South,
Twined his invisible fingers in thy hair,
And, stooping, kissed thee with his odorous mouth,
And chased thee, flying through thy garden shades,
And wooed, as men are wont to woo the maids,
And won at last, and then flew back to Heaven,
Pleading with Jove, till his consent was given,
And thou wert made immortal, — happy day!
The goddess of the flowers, and Queen of May!

O, what a rare and pleasant life is thine,
On blue Olympus, 'mid the gods divine! —
There thou hast gardens, and a range of bowers,
And beds of asphodel, unfading flowers,
And many a leafy screen
In arbors green,

Where thou dost lie, and dream the hours away,
Lulled by the drowsy sound
Of trees around,
And springs that fall in basins full of spray!
Sweet are thy duties and employments there,
In those bright regions of serener air;
Sometimes to wreathe imperial Juno's tresses,
Braided around her brow like beams of light;
Or Cytherea's with bosom bare and white,
Melting to meet Adonis's caresses,
When he lies in his death-sleep, stark and cold;
And oft with Hebe and with Ganymede
Stooping in dews, — a task by Jove decreed, —
Entwining chaplets round their drinking-cups of gold;
And round the necks of Dian's spotted fawns,
Like strings of bells, and Leda's linkèd swans,
That float and sing in Heaven's serenest streams,
Like thoughts in poets' dreams! —
And when red Mars, victorious from the field,
Throws down his glittering spear and dinted shield,
And doffs his plumèd helmet by his side,
To bathe his burning forehead in the tide,
Thou dost a-sly with flowery fetters bind him,
And tie his arms behind him,
Smoothing with playful hands his furrowed cheek,
Until, beguiled and meek,

He kisses thee, and laughs with joy aloud!
And when Minerva, lost in Wisdom's cloud,
Muses abstracted in profoundest nooks,
Thou dost unclasp her ponderous tomes and books,
And press the leaves of flowers within their leaves;
And thou dost bind them up in Ceres' sheaves,
And wreathe Apollo's lyre, and Hermes' rod,
And, venturing near the cloud-compelling God,
Sitting with thought-concentred brows alone,
Bestrew the starry footstool of his throne!
And sometimes thou dost steal to Hades dark and grim,
The shadowy realm of spirits weak and dim,
And, drowsing gloomy Pluto, stern and pale,
With slumberous poppies plucked in Lethe's bowers,
Givest to Proserpine a bunch of flowers,
Such as she dropped in Enna's bloomy vale,
That solemn morn in May
When she was stolen away;
And, pressing it to her white lips in fear,
She kisses thee for that remembrance dear,
And then ye weep together! (softened so,
When Cytherea knelt down, and plead with thee,
And Death was drugged, she let Adonis go;
And so gave Orpheus Eurydice!)
But ere the darkness fades thou dost upsoar,
And walk the Olympian palaces once more;

And when young Hesper folds the morning star,
  And harnesses the wingèd steeds of Day,
And flushed Aurora urges on her car,
  Chasing the shadows of the Night away,
Thou dost with Zephyr fly in pomp behind,
Shaking thy scarf of rainbows on the wind;
And when the Orient is reached at last,
    Thou dost unbar its gate
      Of golden state,
And wait till she and all her train have passed,
And soar again far up the dappled blue,
To wet the laughing Earth with fresher dew
As now thou dost, in pomp and triumph gay,
    This happy, happy day,
Thy festival of joy, divinest Queen of May!

O Flora! heavenly Flora, hear us now,
  Gathered to worship thee in shady bowers;
Accept the simple gifts and tuneful vow
  We offer thee, that thou hast spared the flowers;
The Spring has been a cold, belated one,
Dark clouds, and showers, and a little sun,
And in the nipping mornings hoary frost;
We hoped, but feared the tender seeds were lost;
But, thanks to thee! they soon began to grow,
  Pushing their slender shoots above the ground,

In cultured gardens trim ; and some were found
Beside the edges of the banks of snow,
Heedless, and gay, and bold,
Like children laughing o'er a father's mould.
The sward to-day is full, and teems with more ;
Earth never was so bounteous before :
Here are red roses throwing back their hoods,
Like willing maids, to greet the kissing wind ;
And here are violets from sombre woods,
With tears of dew within their lids enshrined ;
Lilies like little maids in bridal white,
Or in their burial-garments, if you will ;
And here is that bold flower, the daffodil,
That peers i' th' front of March ; and daisies bright,
The vestals of the morn, that love its breeze ;
Snowdrops like specks of foam on stormy seas,
And yellow buttercups that gem the fields,
Like studs of richest gold on massive shields ;
Anemones that sprang, in golden years,
(The story goes they were not seen before,)
Where young Adonis, tuskèd by the boar,
Bled life away, and Venus rained her tears ;
(Look ! in their hearts, a small ensanguined spot !)
And here is pansy, and forget-me-not ;
And prim Narcissus, vain and foolish elf,
Enamored (would you think it ?) of himself,

Looking for ever in the brook, his glass;
And drooping Hyacinthus, slain, alas!
By rudest Auster, blowing in the stead
Of Zephyr, then in Love's bright meshes bound;
Pitching with bright Apollo in his ground,
He blew the discus back, and struck him dead!
Pied wind-flowers, oxlips, and the jessamine;
The sleepy poppy, and the eglantine;
Primroses, Dian's flowers that ope at night;
Also that little sun the marigold,
And fringèd pinks, and water-lilies white,
Like floating naiads from the rivers cold;
Carnations, gilliflowers, and savory rue,
And rosemary that loveth tears for dew,
With other nameless flowers, and pleasant weeds
That grow untended in the marshy meads
Where flags shoot up, and ragged grasses wave
Perennial, when Autumn seeks her grave
Among the withered leaves, and breezes blow,
And Winter weaves a winding-sheet of snow!—
Flowers! O, what loveliness there is in flowers!
What food for thoughts and fancies rich and new!
What shall we liken or compare them to,
In all this world of ours?
Jewels and rare mosaics scattered o'er
Creation's palace-floor;

Or Beauty's dials marking with their leaves
The pomp and flight of golden morns and eves;
Illuminate missals open on the meads,
Bending with rosaries of dewy beads;
Or characters inscribed on Nature's scrolls;
Or sweet thoughts from the heart of Mother Earth;
Or wind-rocked cradles, where the bees in rolls
Of odorous leaves are wont to lie in mirth,
Full-hearted, murmuring the hours away,
Like little children talking at their play;
Or cups and beakers of the butterflies
Brimming with nectar; or a string of bells,
Tolling, unheard, a requiem for the Hours;
Or censers swinging incense to the skies;
Pavilions, tents, and towers,
The little fortresses of insect powers
Who wind their horns within; or magic cells
Where happy fairies dream the time away,
Night elfins slumbering all the summer day,
Sweet nurslings thou art wont to feed with dew
From silver urns, replenished in the blue! —
But this is idlesse all, — away! away!
White-handed maids, and scatter buds around;
And let the lutes awake, and tabors sound,
And every heart its just devotion pay.
Once more we thank thee, Flora! and once more

Perform our rites as we are wont to do;
O, smile upon us, goddess fair and true,
And watch the flowers till summer's reign is o'er;
Preserve the seeds we sow in winter-time
From burrowing moles, and blight, and icy rime,
And in their season cause the shoots to rise,
And make the dainty buds unseal their eyes;
And we will pluck the rarest, and entwine
Chaplets, and lay them on thy rural shrine,
And sing our choral hymns, melodious, sweet,
And dance with nimble feet,
And worship thee, as now, serene and gay,
The joy of all the world, the merry Queen of May!
Io! Triumphe!

ODE.

I.

PALE in her fading bowers the Summer stands,
Like a new Niobe with claspèd hands,
Mute o'er the faded flowers, her children lost,
Slain by the arrows of the early frost!
The clouded Heaven above is pale and gray,
The misty Earth below is wan and drear,
The baying Winds chase all the leaves away,
As cruel hounds pursue the trembling deer; —
It is a solemn time, the sunset of the year!

II.

My heart is sick and sad, for I have toiled
In iron poverty and hopeless tears,
Tugging in fetters at the oar for years,
And, wrestling in the ring of Life, have soiled
My robes with dust, and strained my sinews sore;
I have no strength to struggle any more!

And what if I should perish? None would miss
An idle dreamer in a world like this;
Whate'er our beauty, worth, or loving powers,
We live, we strive, we die, and are forgot;
We are no more regarded than the flowers,
And death and darkness is our destined lot!
One bud from off the tree of Life is naught,
One fruit from off the ripening bough of Thought;
The hinds will ne'er lament, in harvest-time,
The bud or fruit that fell and wasted in its prime!

III.

Away with Action! 't is the ban of Time,
The curse that clung to us from Eden's gate;
We toil, and strain, and tug from youth's fair prime,
And drag a chain for years, a weary weight!
Away with Action! and Laborious Life,—
It was not made for man,
In Nature's plan,
For man was made for quiet, not for strife.
The pearl is shaped serenely in its shell
In the still waters of the ocean deep;
The buried seed begins to pulp and swell
In Earth's warm bosom in profoundest sleep,
And, sweeter far than all, the bridal rose
Flushes to fulness in a soft repose.

Let others gather honey in the world,
And hoard it in their cells until they die;
I am content in dreaminess to lie,
Sipping, in summer hours,
My wants from fading flowers,
An Epicurean till my wings are furled!

IV.

What happy hours, what happy, happy days,
Were mine when I was young, a careless boy,
Oblivious of the world, — its woe or joy!
I lived for Song, and dreamed of budding bays!
I thought when I was dead, if not before,
(I hoped before,) to have a noble name,
To leave my eager footprints on the shore,
And rear my statue in the halls of Fame!
I pondered o'er the Poets dead of old,
Their memories living in the minds of men;
I knew they were but men of mortal mould,
They won their crowns, and I might win again.
I drank delicious vintage from their pages,
Flasks of Parnassian nectar, stored for ages;
My soul was flushed within me, maddened, fired;
I leaped impassioned, like a seer inspired;
I lived, and would have died, for Poesy,
In youth's divine emotion:

A stream that sought its ocean,
A Time that longed to be
Engulfed, and swallowed in its calm Eternity!

v.

O Poesy! my spirit's crownèd queen,
I would that thou couldst in the flesh be seen,
The shape of perfect loveliness thou art,
Enshrined within the chambers of my heart!
I would build thee a palace, richer far
Than princely Aladeen's renowned of old;
With walls and columns all of massy gold,
And every gem incrusting it a star!
Thy throne a pillar of sunset, canopied
With purple mists, a shielded Moon o'erhead;
Thy coffers should o'erflow, and mock the Ind,
Whose boasted wealth would dwindle down to naught;
The rich-ored driftings of the streams of Thought,
Washed lucidly from cloven peaks of Mind!
And I would bring to thee the daintiest things
That grow beneath the summer of thy wings;
Wine from the Grecian vineyards, pressed with care,
Brimming in cups antique, and goblets rare;
And luscious fruitage of enchanted trees,
From magic orchard plots with charmèd gates;

And golden apples of the Hesperides,
Stolen by Fancy from the guardant Fates;
And I would hang around thee day and night,
Nor ever heed, or know the night from day;
If Time had wings, I should not see his flight,
Or feel his shadow in my sunny way!
Forgetful of the world, I 'd stand apart,
And gaze on thee unseen, and touch my lute,
A perfect type and image of my heart,
Whose trembling chords will never more be mute;
And Joy and Grief would mingle in my theme,
A swan and shadow floating down the stream!
And when thou didst in soft disdain, or mirth,
Descend thy throne and walk the common earth,
I would, in brave array, precede thee round,
With pomp and pageantry, and music sweet,
And spread my shining mantle on the ground,
For fear the dust should soil thy golden-sandalled feet!

VI.

Away! away! the days are dim and cold;
The withered flowers are crumbling in the mould;
The Heaven is gray and blank, the Earth is drear,
And fallen leaves are heaped on Summer's bier!
Sweet songs are out of place, however sweet,
When all things else are wrapt in funeral gloom;

True Poets never pipe to dancing feet,
But only elegies around a tomb!
Away with fancy now! the Year demands
A sterner chaplet, and a deeper lay;
A wreath of cypress woven with pious hands,
A dirge for its decay!

LEONATUS.

The fair boy Leonatus,
The page of Imogen.
It was his duty evermore
To tend the Lady Imogen;
By peep of day he might be seen
Tapping against her chamber door,
To wake the sleepy waiting-maid;
Who rose, and when she had arrayed
The Princess, and the twain had prayed
(With pearlèd rosaries used of yore),
They called him, pacing to and fro;
And cap in hand, and bowing low,
He entered, and began to feed
The singing birds with fruit and seed.

The brave boy Leonatus,
The page of Imogen.

He tripped along the kingly hall,
From room to room, with messages;
He stopped the butler, clutched his keys,
(Albeit he was broad and tall,)
And dragged him down the vaults, where wine
In bins lay beaded and divine,
To pick a flask of vintage fine;
Came up, and clomb the garden wall,
And plucked from out the sunny spots
Peaches, and luscious apricots,
And filled his golden salver there,
And hurried to his Lady fair.

The gallant Leonatus,
The page of Imogen.

He had a steed from Arab ground,
And when the lords and ladies gay
Went hawking in the dews of May,
And hunting in the country round,
And Imogen did join the band,
He rode him like a hunter grand,
A hooded hawk upon his hand,
And by his side a slender hound:

But when they saw the deer go by
He slipped the leash, and let him fly,
And gave his fiery barb the rein,
And scoured beside her o'er the plain.

The strange boy Leonatus,
The page of Imogen.

Sometimes he used to stand for hours
Within her room, behind her chair;
The soft wind blew his golden hair
Across his eyes, and bees from flowers
Hummed round him, but he did not stir:
He fixed his earnest eyes on her,
A pure and reverent worshipper,
A dreamer building airy towers:
But when she spoke he gave a start,
That sent the warm blood from his heart,
To flush his cheeks, and every word
The fountain of his feelings stirred.

The sad boy Leonatus,
The page of Imogen.

He lost all relish and delight,
For all things that did please before;
By day he wished the day was o'er,
By night he wished the same of night:

He could not mingle in the crowd,
He loved to be alone, and shroud
His tender thoughts, and sigh aloud,
And cherish in his heart its blight.
At last his health began to fail,
His fresh and glowing cheeks to pale ;
And in his eyes the tears unshed
Did hang like dew in violets dead.

The timid Leonatus,
The page of Imogen.

" What ails the boy ? " said Imogen :
He stammered, sighed, and answered " Naught."
She shook her head, and then she thought
What all his malady could mean ;
It might be love ; her maid was fair,
And Leon had a loving air ;
She watched them with a jealous care,
And played the spy, but naught was seen :
And then she was aware at first,
That she, not knowing it, had nursed
His memory till it grew a part, —
A heart within her very heart !

The dear boy Leonatus,
The page of Imogen.

She loved, but owned it not as yet;
When he was absent she was lone,
She felt a void before unknown,
And Leon filled it when they met;
She called him twenty times a day,
She knew not why, she could not say;
She fretted when he went away,
And lived in sorrow and regret;
Sometimes she frowned with stately mien,
And chid him like a little queen;
And then she soothed him meek and mild,
And grew as trustful as a child.

The neat scribe Leonatus,
The page of Imogen.

She wondered that he did not speak,
And own his love, if love indeed
It was that made his spirit bleed;
And she bethought her of a freak
To test the lad; she bade him write
A letter that a maiden might,
A billet to her heart's delight;
He took the pen with fingers weak,
Unknowing what he did, and wrote,
And folded up, and sealed the note:
She wrote the superscription sage,
"For Leonatus, Lady's Page!"

The happy Leonatus,
The page of Imogen ;
The page of Imogen no more,
But now her love, her lord, her life,
For she became his wedded wife,
As both had hoped and dreamed before.
He used to sit beside her feet,
And read romances rare and sweet,
And, when she touched her lute, repeat
Impassioned madrigals of yore,
Uplooking in her face the while,
Until she stooped with loving smile,
And pressed her melting mouth to his,
That answered in a dreamy bliss, —
The joyful Leonatus,
The Lord of Imogen !

SPRING.

The trumpet winds have sounded a retreat,
Blowing o'er land and sea a sullen strain;
Usurping March, defeated, flies again,
And lays his trophies at the Winter's feet!
And lo! — where April, coming in his turn,
In changeful motleys, half of light and shade,
Leads his belated charge, a delicate maid,
A nymph with dripping urn.

Hail! hail! thrice hail! — thou fairest child of Time,
With all thy retinue of laughing Hours,
Thou paragon from some diviner clime,
And ministrant of its benignest Powers,
Who hath not caught the glancing of thy wing,
And peeped beneath thy mask, delicious Spring?
Sometimes we see thee on the pleasant morns

Of lingering March, with wreathèd crook of gold,
Leading the Ram from out his starry fold,
A leash of light around his jagged horns!
Sometimes in April, goading up the skies
The Bull, whose neck Apollo's silvery flies
Settle upon, a many-twinkling swarm!
And when May-days are warm,
And drawing to a close,
And Flora goes
With Zephyr from his palace in the west,
Thou dost upsnatch the Twins from cradled rest,
And strain them to thy breast,
And haste to meet the expectant, bright new-comer,
The opulent Queen of Earth, the gay, voluptuous
Summer!

Unmuffled now, shorn of thy veil of showers,
Thou tripp'st along the mead with shining hair
Blown back, and scarf out-fluttering on the air,
White-handed, strewing the fresh sward with flowers!
The green hills lift their foreheads far away;
But where thy pathway runs the sod is pressed
By fleecy lambs, behind the budding spray;
And troops of butterflies are hovering round,
And the small swallow drops upon the ground
Beside his mate, and nest!

A little month ago, the sky was gray;
Snow tents were pitched along the mountain-side,
Where March encamped his stormy legions wide,
And shook his standard o'er the fields of Day!
But now the sky is blue, the snow is flown,
And every mountain is an emerald throne,
And every cloud a dais fringed with light,
And all below is beautiful and bright!
The forest waves its plumes, — the hedges blow, —
The south wind scuds along the meadowy sea
Thick-flecked with daisied foam, — and violets grow
Blue-eyed, and cowslips star the bloomy lea;
The skylark floods the scene with pleasant rhyme;
The ousel twitters in the swaying pine;
And wild bees hum about the beds of thyme,
And bend the clover-bells and eglantine;
The snake casts off his skin in mossy nooks;
The long-eared rabbits near their burrows play;
The dormouse wakes; and see! the noisy rooks
Sly foraging, about the stacks of hay!

What sights! what sounds! what rustic life and mirth!
Housed all the winter long from bitter cold,
Huddling in chimney-corners, young and old
Come forth and share the gladness of the Earth.

The ploughmen whistle as the furrows trail
Behind their glittering shares, a billowy row ;
The milkmaid sings a ditty while her pail
Grows full and frothy ; and the cattle low ;
The hounds are yelping in the misty wood,
Starting the fox : the jolly huntsmen cheer ;
And winding horns delight the listening ear,
And startle Echo in her solitude ;
The teamster drives his wagon down the lane,
Flattening a broader rut in weeds and sand ;
The angler fishes in the shady pool ;
And loitering down the road, with cap in hand,
The truant chases butterflies, — in vain,
Heedless of bells that call the village lads to school !

Methinks the world is sweeter than of yore,
More fresh and fine, and more exceeding fair ;
There is a presence never felt before, —
The soul of inspiration everywhere ;
Incarnate Youth in every idle limb,
My vernal days, my prime, return anew ;
My trancèd spirit breathes a silent hymn,
My heart is full of dew !

AUTUMN.

Divinest Autumn! who may sketch thee best,
For ever changeful o'er the changeful globe?
Who guess thy certain crown, thy favorite crest,
The fashion of thy many-colored robe?
Sometimes we see thee stretched upon the ground,
In fading woods where acorns patter fast,
Dropping to feed thy tusky boars around,
Crunching among the leaves the ripened mast;
Sometimes at work where ancient granary-floors
Are open wide, a thresher stout and hale,
Whitened with chaff upwafted from thy flail
While south winds sweep along the dusty floors;
And sometimes fast asleep at noontide hours,
Pillowed on sheaves, and shaded from the heat,
With Plenty at thy feet,
Braiding a coronet of oaten straw and flowers!

What time, emerging from a low-hung cloud,
The shining chariot of the Sun was driven
Slope to its goal, and Day in reverence bowed
His burning forehead at the gate of Heaven; —
Then I beheld thy presence full revealed,
Slow trudging homeward o'er a stubble-field;
Around thy brow, to shade it from the west,
A wisp of straw entwisted in a crown;
A golden wheat-sheaf, slipping slowly down,
Hugged tight against thy waist, and on thy breast,
Linked to a belt, an earthen flagon swung;
And o'er thy shoulder flung,
Tied by their stems, a bundle of great pears,
Bell-shaped and streaky, some rich orchard's pride;
A heavy bunch of grapes on either side,
Across each arm, tugged downward by the load,
Their glossy leaves blown off by wandering airs;
A yellow-rinded melon in thy right,
In thy left hand a sickle caught the light,
Keen as the moon which glowed
Along the fields of night:
One moment seen, the shadowy masque was flown,
And I was left, as now, to meditate alone.

Hark! hark! — I hear the reapers in a row,
Shouting their harvest carols blithe and loud,

Cutting the rustled maize whose crests are bowed
With ears o'ertasselled, soon to be laid low;
Crooked earthward now, the orchards droop their boughs
With red-cheeked fruits, while far along the wall,
Full in the south, ripe plums and peaches fall
In tufted grass where laughing lads carouse;
And down the pastures, where the horse goes round
His ring of tan, beneath the mossy shed,
Old cider-presses work with creaky din,
Oozing in vats, and apples heap the ground;
And hour by hour, a basket on his head,
Up-clambering to the spout, the ploughman pours them in!

Sweet-scented winds from meadows newly mown
Blow eastward now; and now for many a day
The fields will be alive with wains of hay,
And stacks not all unmeet for Autumn's throne!
The granges will be crowded, and the men
Half-smothered, as they tread it from the top;
And then the wains will go, and come again,
And go and come until they end the crop.
And where the melons stud the garden vine,
Crook-necked or globy, smaller carts will wait,
Soon to be urged o'erloaded to the gate
Where apples drying on the stages shine;

And children soon will go at eve and morn
And set their snares for quails with baits of corn;
And when the house-dog snuffs a distant hare,
O'errun the gorgeous woods with noisy glee;
And when the walnuts ripen, climb a tree,
And shake the branches bare!
And by and by, when northern winds are out,
Great fires will roar in chimneys huge at night,
While chairs draw round, and pleasant tales are told:
And nuts and apples will be passed about,
Until the household, drowsy with delight,
Creep off to bed a-cold!

Sovereign of Seasons! Monarch of the Earth!
Steward of bounteous Nature, whose rich alms
Are showered upon us from thy liberal palms,
Until our spirits overflow with mirth!
Divinest Autumn! while our garners burst
With plenteous harvesting, an heaped increase,
We lift our eyes to thee through grateful tears.
World-wide in boons, vouchsafe to visit first,
And linger last along our realm of Peace,
Where Freedom calmly sits, and beckons on the Years!

THE WITCH'S WHELP.

Along the shore the slimy brine-pits yawn,
Covered with thick green scum; the billows rise,
And fill them to the brim with clouded foam,
And then subside, and leave the scum again.
The ribbèd sand is full of hollow gulfs,
Where monsters from the waters come and lie;
Great serpents bask at noon along the rocks, —
To me no terror; coil on coil they roll
Back to their holes, before my flying feet;
The Dragon of the Sea, my mother's god,
Enormous Setebos, comes here to sleep;
Him I molest not; when he flaps his wing
A whirlwind rises, when he swims the deep
It threatens to engulf the trembling isle.
Sometimes, when winds do blow, and clouds are dark,
I seek the blasted wood, whose barkless trunks

Are bleached with summer suns ; the creaking trees
Stoop down to me, and swing me right and left,
Through crashing limbs, but not a jot care I:
The thunder breaks o'erhead, and in their lairs
The panthers roar ; from out the stormy clouds
With hearts of fire, sharp lightnings rain around
And split the oaks ; not faster lizards run
Before the snake up the slant trunks than I;
Not faster down, sliding with hands and feet.
I stamp upon the ground, and adders rouse
Sharp-eyed, with poisonous fangs ; beneath the leaves
They couch, or under rocks, and roots of trees
Felled by the winds ; through briery undergrowth
They slide with hissing tongues, beneath my feet
To writhe, or in my fingers squeezed to death.
  There is a wild and solitary pine,
Deep in the meadows; all the island birds
From far and near fly there, and learn new songs;
Something imprisoned in its wrinkled bark
Wails for its freedom ; when the bigger light
Burns in mid-heaven, and dew elsewhere is dried,
There it still falls ; the quivering leaves are tongues,
And load the air with syllables of woe.
One day I thrust my spear within a cleft
No wider than its point, and something shrieked,
And falling cones did pelt me sharp as hail :

I picked the seeds that grew between their plates,
And strung them round my neck, with sea-mew eggs.
  Hard by are swamps and marshes, reedy fens
Knee-deep in water; monsters wade therein
Thick-set with plated scales; sometimes in troops
They crawl on slippery banks; sometimes they lash
The sluggish waves, among themselves at war;
Often I heave great rocks from off the crags,
And crush their bones; often I push my spear
Deep in their drowsy eyes, at which they howl
And chase me inland; then I mount their humps
And prick them back again, unwieldy, slow:
At night the wolves are howling round the place,
And bats sail there athwart the silver light,
Flapping their wings; by day in hollow trees
They hide, and slink into the gloom of dens.
  We live, my mother Sycorax and I,
In caves with bloated toads and crested snakes;
She can make charms, and philters, and brew storms,
And call the great Sea Dragon from his deeps:
Nothing of this know I, nor care to know;
Give me the milk of goats in gourds or shells,
The flesh of birds and fish, berries, and fruit,
Nor want I more, save all day long to lie,
And hear, as now, the voices of the sea.

HYMN TO THE BEAUTIFUL.

My heart is full of tenderness and tears,
And tears are in mine eyes, I know not why;
With all my grief content to live for years, —
Or even this hour to die.
My youth is gone, but that I heed not now;
My love is dead, or worse than dead can be;
My friends drop off like blossoms from a bough, —
But nothing troubles me,
Only the golden flush of sunset lies
Within my heart like fire, like dew within my eyes!

Spirit of Beauty! whatsoe'er thou art,
I see thy skirts afar, and feel thy power;
It is thy presence fills this charmèd hour,
And fills my charmèd heart; —

Nor mine alone, but myriads feel thee now,
That know not what they feel, nor why they bow;
Thou canst not be forgot,
For all men worship thee, and know it not;
Nor men alone, but babes with wondrous eyes,
New-comers on the Earth, and strangers from the skies!

We hold the keys of Heaven within our hands,
The gift and heirloom of a former state,
And lie in infancy at Heaven's gate,
Transfigured in the light that streams along the lands!
Around our pillows golden ladders rise,
And up and down the skies,
With wingèd sandals shod,
The angels come, and go, the Messengers of God!
Nor do they, fading from us, e'er depart,—
It is the childish heart;
We walk as heretofore,
Adown their shining ranks, but see them — nevermore!
Not Heaven is gone, but we are blind with tears,
Groping our way along the downward slope of Years!

From earliest infancy my heart was thine;
With childish feet I trod thy temple aisles;
Not knowing tears, I worshipped thee with smiles,
Or if I ever wept, it was with joy divine!

By day, and night, on land, and sea, and air, —
I saw thee everywhere!
A voice of greeting from the wind was sent;
The mists enfolded me with soft white arms;
The birds did sing to lap me in content,
The rivers wove their charms, —
And every little daisy in the grass
Did look up in my face, and smile to see me pass!

Not long can Nature satisfy the mind,
Nor outward fancies feed its inner flame;
We feel a growing want we cannot name,
And long for something sweet, but undefined:
The wants of Beauty other wants create,
Which overflow on others, soon or late;
For all that worship thee must ease the heart,
By Love, or Song, or Art:
Divinest Melancholy walks with thee,
Her thin white cheek for ever leaned on thine;
And Music leads her sister Poesy,
In exultation shouting songs divine!
But on thy breast Love lies, — immortal child! —
Begot of thine own longings, deep and wild;
The more we worship him, the more we grow
Into thy perfect image here below;
For here below, as in the spheres above,
All Love is Beauty, and all Beauty, Love!

Not from the things around us do we draw
Thy light within ; within the light is born ;
The growing rays of some forgotten morn,
And added canons of eternal law.
The painter's picture, the rapt poet's song,
The sculptor's statue, never saw the Day ;
Not shaped and moulded after aught of clay,
Whose crowning work still does its spirit wrong ;
Hue after hue divinest pictures grow,
Line after line immortal songs arise,
And limb by limb, out-starting stern and slow,
The statue wakes with wonder in its eyes !
And in the master's mind
Sound after sound is born, and dies like wind,
That echoes through a range of ocean caves,
And straight is gone to weave its spell upon the waves !
The mystery is thine,
For thine the more mysterious human heart,
The Temple of all Wisdom, Beauty's Shrine,
The Oracle of Art !

Earth is thine outer court, and Life a breath ;
Why should we fear to die, and leave the Earth ?
Not thine alone the lesser key of Birth, —
But all the keys of Death ;
And all the worlds, with all that they contain

Of Life, and Death, and Time, are thine alone ;
The Universe is girdled with a chain,
And hung below the Throne
Where Thou dost sit, the Universe to bless, —
Thou sovereign Smile of God, Eternal Loveliness !

TO A CELEBRATED SINGER.

Oft have I dreamed of music rare and fine,
The wedded melody of lute and voice,
Divinest strains that made my soul rejoice,
And woke its inner harmonies divine.
And where Sicilia smooths the ruffled seas,
And Enna hollows all its purple vales,
Thrice have I heard the noble nightingales,
All night entranced beneath the bloomy trees;
But music, nightingales, and all that Thought
Conceives of song are naught
To thy rich voice, which echoes in my brain,
And fills my longing heart with a melodious pain!

A thousand lamps were lit, — I saw them not,
Nor all the thousands round me like a sea;
Life, Death, and Time, and all things were forgot;

I only thought of thee!
Meanwhile the music rose sublime and strong,
But sunk beneath thy voice, which rose alone,
Above its crumbled fragments to thy throne,
Above the clouds of Song.
Henceforth let Music seal her lips, and be
The silent ministrant of Poesy;
For not the delicate reed that Pan did play
To partial Midas, at the match of old,
Nor yet Apollo's lyre with chords of gold,
That more than won the crown he lost that day;
Nor even the Orphean lute, that half set free —
O, why not all? — the lost Eurydice, —
Were fit to join with thee;
Much less our instruments of meaner sound,
That track thee slowly o'er enchanted ground,
Unfit to lift the train thy music leaves,
Or glean around its sheaves!

I strive to disentangle in my mind
Thy many knotted threads of softest song,
Whose memory haunts me like a voiceless wind,
Whose silence does it wrong.
No single tone thereof, no perfect sound,
Lingers, but dim remembrance of the whole;
A sound which was a Soul,

The Soul of sound diffused, an atmosphere around,
So soft, so sweet, so mellow, rich, and deep!
So like a heavenly soul's ambrosial breath,
It would not wake, but only deepen Sleep
Into diviner Death!
Softer and sweeter than the jealous flute,
Whose soft, sweet voice grew harsh before its own,
It stole in mockery its every tone,
And left it lone and mute;
It flowed like liquid pearl through golden cells,
It jangled like a string of golden bells,
It trembled like a wind in golden strings,
It dropped and rolled away in golden rings;
Then it divided and became a shout,
That Echo chased about,
However wild and fleet,
Until it trod upon its heels with flying feet!
At last it sank and sank from deep to deep,
Below the thinnest word,
And sank till naught was heard,
But charmèd Silence sighing in its sleep!

Powerless and mute beneath thy mighty spell,
My heart was lost within itself and thee,
As when a pearl is melted in its shell,
And sunken in the sea!

I sank and sank beneath thy song, but still
I thirsted after more, the more I sank ;
A flower that drooped with all the dew it drank,
But still upheld its cup for Heaven to fill.
My inmost soul was drunk with melody,
Which thou didst pour around,
To crown the feast of sound,
And lift to every lip, but chief to me,
Whose spirit, uncontrolled,
Drained all the fiery wine, and clutched its cup of gold !

O Queen of Song ! as peerless as thou art,
As worthy as thou art to wear thy crown,
Thou hast a deeper claim to thy renown,
And a diviner music in thy heart ;
Simplicity and Goodness walk with thee,
Beneath the wings of watchful Seraphim :
And Love is wed to whitest Chastity,
And Pity sings its hymn.
Nor is thy virtue passive in its end,
But ever active as the sun and rain :
Unselfish, lavish of its golden gain,
Not only Want's, but a whole nation's Friend !
This is thy glory, this thy noblest fame ;
And when thy glory fades, and fame departs,
This will perpetuate a deathless name
Where names are deathless, — deep in loving hearts !

THE TWO GATES.

THERE are two starry gates, like Morn and Even,
Flung back along the thresholds of a plain,
Where Earth looks out upon the watchful Heaven,
And Heaven looks in upon the Earth again.

One lifts its pillars from a sea of flowers,
And pours along the lands a flood of light:
The other wraps in clouds its iron towers,
While half the world around is lost in Night.

White-robed and innocent, in linkèd bands
Young children crowd the first, with dreamy eyes,
And pluck the lilies there with eager hands,
The sole surviving blooms of Paradise.

Youth leads them down the path, but soon departs:
And Manhood beckons to its stern estate;
Save when the angels fold them to their hearts,
And bear them swiftly through the iron gate.

Some urge their chariots to the distant goals ;
Some wallow in the mire of sensual things ;
And some preserve the whiteness of their souls,
And walk beneath theshade of angels' wings.

The monarch feasts in purple robe and crown ;
The ragged beggar starves for want of bread ;
And laurelled conquerors reap their red renown,
While widows weep, and orphans wail the dead.

But all in turn are borne across the plain,
Or swift or slow, by some resistless fate,
With which they strive from year to year — in vain,
Impelled for ever towards the shadowy gate.

Some in their youth, while Hope still waves her torch,
And some in age, when locks are thin and white,
Groping their way along the cloudy porch,
Until they vanish in the yawning night.

All vanish there, and are replaced again
By myriads more, that tread the paths they trod ;
And God looks down upon that host of men,
But few of all the host look up again to God !

THE BROKEN GOBLET.

One day some shepherds found a Faun asleep,
Beneath the shelter of a shady oak:
Said one, "What say you? let us bind him here,
And he shall sing before we let him go.
They say these creatures are poetical;
But who would guess it from their looks and life?"
They bound him to the tree with withered vines,
And pelted him with acorns, till he woke.
And "Where am I?" he said, and "What is this?
This oak is not the one before my cave,
Nor were these vines around me, till I slept.
But where is now my goblet? Can it be —
'T is shivered yonder! — Gods! it is too much!
Who has been fooling with me? Ah! 't is you,
Hidden behind yon tuft of birchen spray.
I see your crook, my quaint Arcadian,

And you, my lad, perched on yon swinging limb.
Cease pelting me, — you hurt me ! Let me loose !
Undo these viny fetters if you please."
"But no," said they, "we do not please at all ;
Sing us a song, and we will let you go."
"What shall I sing about, mischievous boys? —
My theme shall be the Broken Goblet now,
But mind, you must not ask too much of me ;
With this misfortune fresh upon my heart,
I cannot sing as I was wont to do."
They sat beside him, and the Faun began :

I.

My goblet was exceeding beautiful.
It was the jewel of my cave ; I had
A corner where I hid it in the moss,
Between the jagged crevices of rock,
Where no one but myself could find it out ;
But when a nymph or wood-god passed my door,
I filled it to the brim with bravest wine,
And offered them a draught, and told them all
That Jove had nothing richer at his feasts,
Though Ganymede and Hebe did their best :
His nectar is not richer than my wine,
Said I, and for the cup, — it speaks itself ! —
But I have broken my divinest cup,
And trod its fragments in the dust of Earth !

II.

My goblet was exceeding beautiful.
Sometimes my shaggy brothers of the wood
Held gay carousals with me in my cave ;
I had a skin of Chian wine therein,
Of which I made a feast ; and all who drank
From out my dainty cup, a feast itself,
Made songs about the bright, immortal shapes
Engraven on the side below their lips :
But we shall never drain it any more,
And never sing about it any more ;
For I have broken my divinest cup,
And trod its fragments in the dust of Earth !

III.

My goblet was exceeding beautiful.
For Pan was graved upon it, rural Pan ;
He sat at noon within a shady bower
Piping, with all his listening herd around ;
(I thought at times I saw his fingers move,
And heard his music : did I dream or not ?)
Hard by the Satyrs danced, and Dryads peeped
From out the mossy trunks of ancient trees ;
And nice-eared Echo mocked him till he thought —
The simple god ! — he heard another Pan
Playing, and wonder shone in his large eyes !

But I have broken my divinest cup,
And trod its fragments in the dust of Earth!

IV.

My goblet was exceeding beautiful.
For Jove was there transformed into the Bull
Bearing forlorn Europa through the waves,
Leaving behind a track of ruffled foam;
Powerless with fear she held him by the horns,
Her golden tresses streaming on the winds;
And Cupids sported near in rocking shells,
And sea-gods glanced from out their weedy caves,
And on the shore were maids with waving scarfs,
And hinds a-coming to the rescue — late!
But I have broken my divinest cup,
And trod its fragments in the dust of Earth!

V.

My goblet was exceeding beautiful.
For rosy Bacchus crowned its rich designs:
He sat within a vineyard full of grapes,
With Ariadne kneeling at his side;
His arm was thrown around her slender waist,
His head lay in her bosom, and she held
A cup a little distance from his lips,
And teased him with it, for he wanted it.

A pair of spotted pards were sleeping near,
Couchant in shade, their heads upon their paws ;
And revellers were dancing in the woods,
Snapping their jolly fingers evermore !
But all is vanished, lost, for ever lost,
For I have broken my divinest cup,
And trod its fragments in the dust of Earth !

ARCADIAN IDYL.

Walking at dew-fall yester-eve, I met
The shepherd Lycidas adown the vale.
"What ho! my piping wonder!" I exclaimed,
Seeing his eyes were bent upon the ground,
Counting the pebbles, lost it seemed in thought;
"What cheer, dear Lycid! why are you so wrapt?
Has Galatea, white-handed maid, been false?
Or have the Muses quite forsaken you?"
"O, no! Theocritus," he said with smiles,
"White-handed Galatea has not been false,
Nor have the Muses yet forsaken me.
You know, my friend, the man I love so much,
The Spartan Poet, brave and beautiful; —
I have been sketching out a simple song,
About his style of singing, and mine own."
"O, let me hear it!" I replied with glee,
"Fresh from your brain, with all its fire and faults;

There 's nothing like a poet's first rude draft;
Go on! go on!" said I. And he began.

"Great is Apollo with his golden shell,
The gift of Hermes in his infancy;
And great is Hermes' self, light-fingered god:
But greater far than both, illustrious Pan,
Divinest Pan, who taught the shepherd swains
In Thessaly the wonder of his pipe. —
Hear me, great Pan! O, let thy spirit breathe
From out these oaten stops, and I will pile
Three square stones, altar-wise, and offer up
A lamb to thee, the firstling of my flock!

We love in others what we lack ourselves,
And would be every thing but what we are.
The vine uplifts its trailing parasites,
And clasps the great arms of the stooping oak,
Till both are wedded with a thousand rings!
I have a friend as different from myself,
As Hercules from Hylas, his delight.
True Poets are we both, but he the best:
His songs are full of nobleness and power,
Magnificent as storms on Caucasus,
Or the deep runes the solemn Ocean chants
White-haired in echoing caverns; mine are low

As Spring's first airs, and delicate as buds.
He loves the rugged mountains, stern and wild,
Lifting their summits in the blank of dawn
Crested with surging pines; and the gray seas
That urge their heavy waves on rocky crags;
And the unmeasured vastness of the sky,
With all its stars, intense, and white, and cold:
But I am soft and gentle as a fawn
That licks the hand that feeds it; or the dove
That nestles in the breast of Cytherea! —
I love the haunt of wood-nymphs, and the mists
Where Oreads shroud their thin divinity;
The lawns, and meadows, and the pasture-lands
Sprinkled with daisies, and all quiet spots.
My heart is full of sweetness, like a rose;
And delicate melodies like vernal bees
Hum to themselves within its folded leaves,
So deep in honey that they cannot stir!
I would be Pleasure's Poet till I died,
And die at last upon her burning heart;
But he, selected for his majesty,
To Wisdom turns, and worships her afar,
Awed by her calm, large eyes, and spacious brow:
And yet in sooth his heart is soft enough,
With all its strength, enthroned in loveliness
Like Etna looming from its base of flowers;

And he will wed his love ere Summer dies,
While I must live a pensive bachelor;
A state I am not fond of, — no, by Jove!
But never mind it; I will still sing on,
And be the ablest nightingale I can,
And he may be the eagle if he will;
I cannot follow him, I know right well, —
None half so well, — but I will watch his flight
And love him, though he leave me for the stars!"

Thus sang the shepherd Lycidas to me,
And when the sickle of the Moon was drawn
From out its sheaf of clouds, and Hesper lit
His harvest torch, we parted for the night.

THE SOUTH.

FALL! thickly fall! thou winter snow!
And keenly blow, thou winter wind!
Only the barren North is yours;
The South delights a summer mind;
So fall and blow,
Both wind and snow,
My Fancy to the South doth go!

Half-way between the frozen zones,
Where Winter reigns in sullen mirth,
The Summer binds a golden belt
About the middle of the Earth.
The sky is soft, and blue, and bright
With purple dyes at morn and night;
And bright and blue the seas which lie
In perfect rest, and glass the sky;

And sunny bays with inland curves
  Round all along the quiet shore;
And stately palms in pillared ranks
Grow down the borders of the banks,
  And juts of land where billows roar;
The spicy woods are full of birds,
  And golden fruits, and crimson flowers;
With wreathèd vines on every bough,
  That shed their grapes in purple showers;
The emerald meadows roll their waves,
  And bask in soft and mellow light;
The vales are full of silver mist,
  And all the folded hills are bright;
But far along the welkin's rim
The purple crags and peaks are dim;
And dim the gulfs, and gorges blue,
  With all the wooded passes deep;
All steeped in haze, and washed in dew,
  And bathed in atmospheres of Sleep!

Sometimes the dusky islanders
  Lie all day long beneath the trees,
And watch the white clouds in the sky,
  And birds upon the azure seas;
Sometimes they wrestle on the turf,
  And chase each other down the sands;

And sometimes climb the bloomy groves,
And pluck the fruit with idle hands ;
And dark-eyed maidens braid their hair
With starry shells, and buds, and leaves,
And sing wild songs in dreamy bowers,
And dance on dewy eves, —
When daylight melts, and stars are few,
And west winds frame a drowsy tune,
Till all the charmèd waters sleep
Beneath a yellow moon !

Here men may dwell, and mock at toil,
And all the dull mechanic arts ;
No need to till the teeming soil,
With weary hands and aching hearts ;
No want can follow folded palms,
For Nature doth supply her alms
With sweets, purveyors cannot bring
To grace the table of a King ;
While Summer broods o'er land and sea,
And breathes in all the winds,
Until her presence fills their hearts,
And moulds their happy minds !

TRIUMPHANT MUSIC.

I.

Ay! give me music! flood the air with sound!
But let it be superb, and brave, and high;
Not such as leaves my wild ambition bound
In soft delights, but lifts it to the sky;
No sighs, nor tears, but deep, indignant calm,
And scorn of all but strength, my only need;
From whence, but Music, should my strength proceed? —
From some Titanic psalm? —
Some thunderous strand of sound, which in its roll
Shall lift to starry heights my fiery soul!

II.

Strike on the noisy drum, and let the fife
Scream like a tortured soul in pain intense,

But let the trumpet brood above their strife,
Victorious, in its calm magnificence;
Nor fear to wake again the golden lute,
That runs along my quivering nerves like fire;
Nor let the silver-chorded lyre be mute,
But bring the tender lyre,
For sweetness with all strength should wedded be, —
But bring the strength, the sweetness dwells in me!

III.

Play on! play on! the strain is fit to feed
A feast of Gods, in banquet-halls divine;
Not one would taste the cups of Ganymede, —
But only drink this more ambrosial wine!
Play on! play on! the secret soul of Sound
Unfolds itself at every cunning turn;
The trumpet lifts its shield, a stormy round,
The lute its dewy urn, —
But in the lyre, the wild and passionate lyre,
Lies all its might, its madness, and desire!

IV.

Again! again! and let the rattling drum
Begin to roll, and let the bugle blow,
Like winter winds, when woods are stark and dumb,
Shouting above a wilderness of snow!

Pour hail, and lightning, from the fife and lyre,
And let the trumpet pile its clouds of doom ; —
But I o'ertop them with a darker plume,
And beat my wings of fire ; —
Not like a struggling eagle baffled there,
But like a spirit on a throne of air !

v.

In vain ! in vain ! we only soar to sink ;
Though Music gives us wings, we sink at last ;
The peaks of rapture topple near the brink
Of Death, or Madness pallid and aghast ; —
But still play on ! you rapt musicians, play !
But now a softer and serener strain ;
Give me a dying fall, that lives again,
Again to die away ; —
Play on ! but softly till my breath grows deep,
And Music leaves me in the arms of Sleep !

MEMORY.

O Memory! who shall paint thee as thou art?
Who shall embody thee, since every heart,
Shaping from self alone
Conception of its own,
Doth o'er thee its peculiar mantle cast?
Sometimes thou watchest o'er the solemn Past,
Like sweet Cordelia by the couch of Lear,
Smoothing with pious hands his snowy hair;
Or young-eyed Spring, a virgin debonair,
By Winter's shrouded bier.
Sometimes thou followest the reaper Time,
Gleaning with needful care whate'er he leaves,
The loose ears shaken from his garnered sheaves,
The relics of our prime;
Sometimes thou sittest like a maid, alone,
In pleasant dreams of Youth, thy true-love flown,

Reading his burning letters o'er for hours,
Kissing his gifts, and all his faded flowers,
And more than all, the miniature of old,
Thick-set with jewels, in a case of gold;
And sometimes, full of grief, thou liest in tears,
Within the solemn sepulchre of Years,
Clasping the urns, and scattering flowers above
The mouldering dust of Hope, and Faith, and Love.

Thou hast a thousand votaries, Memory!
A thousand happy hearts delight in thee;
What dost thou want with me?
Why dost thou haunt me so? In mercy cease,
And give my tortured heart a moment's peace;
I have a hell within me, — is it naught?
Why stretch me longer on the rack of Thought?
There are some chords of feeling, tender chords,
A touch would break, they are so nearly broken;
And some impassioned words, but bitter words,
Must never more be spoken.
I sigh, but oh! 't is not for thee I sigh;
I thirst, but pass thy maddening beaker by;
I sigh for rest, I thirst for Lethe's wave,
And hope ere long to find them — in my grave!

HARLEY RIVER.

THROUGH the midst of the town the river runs,
Stealing through meadows and pastures green,
Like a gliding snake in the dewy grass,
A moment hid, and a moment seen;
Winding along through clover-fields,
And orchards by hawthorn hedges crossed,
It hurries away with its silver feet,
And at last in the distant sea is lost.

It lies like a mirror before me now,
Glassing the sky with its clouds of snow;
And long green grasses, and slender reeds,
And bushes, beside the margin grow;
A breath of wind steals over its face,
And ripples a moment the tranquil tide;
And the willows dip, and the long boughs drip,
And circles are spreading on every side.

Hard by the bridge, and over the dam,
The little Mill standeth, old and gray ;
The gates are up, and the water falls,
Making a sleepy noise all day :
The heavy old wheel is turning round,
Grinding the farmers' wheat and corn ;
And the chaff floats out, and the yellow meal,
Like golden mist from the fields at morn.

A little way out from the rippled shore,
Where the flags shoot up, and the cresses float,
Water-lilies are pitched, like tents,
Or the folded sails of a fairy boat :
The sand at the bottom is flecked with shells,
Hollow on hollow, and ridge on ridge ;
With wavering weeds, and shimmering stones,
And the mossy wrecks of the fallen bridge.

Here the boys of the village come and play
Through the spring and summer at leisure hours,
Launching their argosies dug from chips,
Laden with pebbles, and weeds, and flowers ;
Wading in for the calamus roots,
And lilies, and shells that pave the sand,
And sailing out upon crazy planks,
Stoned by their shouting mates on land.

The simpler, straying with staff and scrip,
Culls his rarest herbs on the brink ;
The way-side traveller, dusty and dry,
Stops by the crystal stream to drink ;
The angler comes with his bending rod,
And lieth beneath a shady tree,
Feeling his line, from time to time,
A quiet and patient man, perdie !

Wagoners, urging their loaded wains
To market, water their horses here ;
And the ploughman, driving a-field at morn,
Halts with his yoked and hornèd steer ;
Cattle stand in the cooling tide,
In summer noons, by the insects stung ;
And the milk-white lambs and the shepherd's dog
Lap the water with panting tongue.

And winters, when ice has fettered the stream,
The lads come hither before the sun,
And skate till they hear the school-bell ring
Its morning knell of frolic and fun ;
While the lesser children, muffled up warm,
Drag each other on sleds about,
And slide in a row on the slippery paths,
And fall in heaps with a mighty shout.

When I was a boy with a careless heart,
I played with mine ancient comrades here ;
My foot was as light, my voice was as loud,
And my innocent spirit as full of cheer ;
But wrinkled and careworn now I stand
By the river's bank with a throb of pain,
And sigh that the days which have passed away,
Like its waters, can never return again.

THE BLACKSMITH'S SHOP.

Beside the road in Harley town
There stands an ancient Blacksmith's Shop,
Whose walls and roofs are dark and low,
With chimneys peeping o'er the top;
Some two or three on either side,
But only one with fire supplied,
Which puffs its smoky volumes high,
In dusky wreaths along the sky.

Harrows, and wains with splintered shafts,
And broken wheels, are standing round;
And molten coals and cinders lie
In scattered heaps along the ground;
And in the yard, beside the door,
You see the square old tireing-floor,
With grass, and weeds, and waving sedge
Bent down around its blackened edge.

Fronting the door the anvil stands,
With burnished surface broad and clear;
The rusty pinchers dropped in haste,
And heavy sledge, are lying near;
While hammers, tongs, and chisels cold,
And crooked nails, and horseshoes old,
With all the tools renowned of yore
In blacksmith ditties, strew the floor.

Beneath the window stands a row
Of dusty benches rough and rude;
And bars and files are thrown thereon,
And vices on the edge are screwed;
And see! — the last year's almanac,
With songs and ballads torn and black,
And battle prints by sea and land,
That line the walls on every hand.

The forge is in a little nook,
Before the chimney slant and wide;
And, in a leather apron clad,
You see the helper by its side:
Nodding his head and paper crown,
He moves the handle up and down,
Beneath his arm, with motion slow,
And makes the rattling bellows blow.

Hard by, the blacksmith folds his arms,
And swells their knotted sinews strong ;
Or turns his iron in the fire,
And rakes the coals, and hums a song :
But when his heat throws out its light,
He hurries to the anvil bright,
And sledges fall with deafening sound,
And sparks are flying thick around.

The village idlers lounge about,
And talk the country gossip o'er ;
And now and then a farmer's man
Drives up on horseback to the door :
And reapers come from pastures near,
And Ned the ploughman with his steer,
And passing teamsters broken down,
O'erloaded for the neighboring town.

From morning's break to evening's close,
In early spring and autumn time,
The dusky blacksmith plies his craft,
And makes his heavy anvil chime ;
And oft he works at dead of night,
Like some deep thinker, strong and bright,
That shapes his stern, laborious lore
In iron thoughts, for evermore !

THE OLD ELM.

WHERE the bank of the river slopes away,
And the road runs down to Harley bay,
(A sheet of glass through the summer day,)
The Old Elm stands
With its knotted limbs,
Waving their leaves in the ocean breeze,
The pomp and pride of the village trees.

'T is a brave old tree, though its trunk is dark,
With a mossy beard, and a wrinkled bark;
And they say sometimes that the early lark
And the swallow build
Their nests in the boughs,
Where the birds can peep at the azure sky,
Rocking about in their cradles high.

In the sunny Spring, and the frosty Fall,
When the schoolboys round are playing ball,
They run to the edge o' th' garden wall,
(Where the peach-trees stand
And the currants grow,)
And breathless, sly, with a shout of glee,
Back to their base, the glorious Tree!

And truants climb in the emerald spray,
Up to the top where the swallows lay,
Filching their eggs from day to day;
They wave their caps
At the screaming birds,
And drop, while the boughs are cracking round,
Scratched and bruised, on the stony ground.

When the sky is bright with the noontide beam,
And the cattle wade in the neighboring stream,
The wagoner, driving his heavy team,
In a cloud of dust,
To the market town,
Turns from the road, an hour delayed,
To rest and dream in the grateful shade.

Summer has gone with its bloom and sheen,
And sober Autumn invests the scene,

The Old Elm doffs its robe of green,
And dresses in state
Like a herald proud,
Shedding the leaves from his giant palms,
Autumn's largesse, and lavish alms!

Alas! I am like the fading tree,
And scatter my foliage fast and free,
Illuminate leaves of Poesy;
A bountiful alms
Of golden thought,
Soon to be swept, by a solemn blast,
Away to the dead and wasted Past!

LU LU.

Lu Lu is soft and timid as the dove ;
But I am wilder than a mountain eagle :
My matted locks are darker than the clouds
That lower around the brows of stormy hills ;
The glances of mine eye are like the lightnings,
Shot through the ragged eyelids of the storm :
But when I think of thee, my sweet Lu Lu !
No child can have a heart as soft as mine.

I saw Lu Lu at daybreak with her fawn ;
She led it by her in a silken leash :
O simple fawn ! if I were in thy place,
I would not need a leash to follow her !
The dove I gave her yesterday has learned,
Already learned, to nestle in her breast ;
Too happy dove ! if I were in thy place —
If ? if ? — by Allah I must be, or die !

KAM POU.

Of Kam Pou.

Kam Pou with the soft blue eyes,
He is my Uncle's man :
And Pou Tsi is my maid,
The sister of Kam Pou.

Of Pou Tsi.

When Kam Pou is away,
I look at little Pou Tsi :
Her eyes are soft and blue,
But nothing so sweet as his !

Binding Sheaves.

Kam Pou in the barley-field
Binds his sheaves in the sun :
Float over the sun, ye clouds !
Lest it burn the white-faced boy !

The Uncle.

My Uncle is old and white,
And wise — in his own conceit:
He says I must wed Vulá,
But I will not, dear Kam Pou!

The Garden Call.

Come to my garden, sweet,
After your sheaves are bound:
Pou Tsi, your sister dear
(And mine), will open the gate.

Beware!

Look out for my Uncle, though,
His eyes are sharp and sly:
And he will slay you dead;
Then what would become of me?

Of Vulá.

I will not wed Vulá,
For all his junks of tea:
But thee, whose only wealth
Is a heart, — nay, two hearts now!

Art back again?

What! you are back again!
I did n't beckon you:

But since he has come so far,
Pou Tsi, you may let him in.

Shamefacedness.

But oh! he must be so still,
And never look in my face,
Because it will make me blush:
(He colors up to the eyes!)

Kiss me, Sweet!

Pou Tsi, run back for my veil.
Here is a screen of trees:
You may kiss me in the mouth:
Do you love me, dear Kam Pou?

A HOUSEHOLD DIRGE.

"A six years' loss to Paradise, —
And ne'er on Earth the child grew older."
T. B. Read.

I 've lost my little May at last!
She perished in the spring,
When earliest flowers began to bud,
And earliest birds to sing;
I laid her in a country grave,
A green and soft retreat,
A marble tablet o'er her head,
And violets at her feet.

I would that she were back again,
In all her childish bloom;
My joy and hope have followed her,
My heart is in her tomb!

I know that she is gone away,
I know that she is fled,
I miss her everywhere, and yet
I cannot think her dead!

I wake the children up at dawn,
And say a simple prayer,
And draw them round the morning meal,
But one is wanting there!
I see a little chair apart,
A little pinafore,
And Memory fills the vacancy,
As Time will — nevermore!

I sit within my quiet room,
Alone, and write for hours,
And miss the little maid again
Among the window flowers,
And miss her with her toys beside
My desk in silent play;
And then I turn and look for her,
But she has flown away!

I drop my idle pen, and hark,
And catch the faintest sound;

She must be playing hide-and-seek
In shady nooks around;
She 'll come and climb my chair again,
And peep my shoulders o'er;
I hear a stifled laugh, — but no,
She cometh nevermore!

I waited only yester-night,
The evening service read,
And lingered for my idol's kiss
Before she went to bed;
Forgetting she had gone before,
In slumbers soft and sweet,
A monument above her head,
And violets at her feet.

SONGS AND SONNETS.

"Though my songs are somewhat strange,
And speak the words that touch my change,
Blame not my lute."

SIR THOMAS WYATT.

How are songs begot and bred?
How do golden measures flow?
From the heart, or from the head?
Happy Poet! let me know.

Tell me first how folded flowers
Bud and bloom in vernal bowers;
How the south wind shapes its tune, —
The harper he of June!

None may answer, none may know;
Winds and flowers come and go,
And the selfsame canons bind
Nature and the Poet's mind.

SILENT SONGS.

If I could ever sing the songs
  Within me day and night,
The only fit accompaniment
  Would be a lute of light!

A thousand dreamy melodies,
  Begot with pleasant pain,
Like incantations float around
  The chambers of my brain!

But when I strive to utter one,
  It mocks my feeble art,
And leaves me silent, with the thorns
  Of Music in my heart!

AN IDEAL.

A soft ideal long beloved,
But long beloved in vain,
In Memory's gallery hangs alone,
The picture of my brain!

It is not young nor beautiful,
But worn with sin and care,—
Like her who washed the feet of Christ,
And wiped them with her hair!

But oh! the sweetness of the face,—
The sadness of the eye!—
It haunts my soul by day and night,
And will until I die!

She left the world in early youth,
Without a sigh resigned,
To wear the veil of thought within
The cloisters of her mind.

The vanities and cares of life
Did never reach her there;
Her days were passed in holy works,
Her nights were passed in prayer:

But not for sorrows of her own,
Nor sins to be forgiven;
Devotions were the golden rounds
By which she rose to Heaven.

THERE 's a new grave in the old churchyard,
Another mound in the snow,
And a maid whose soul is whiter far
Sleeps in her shroud below!

The winds of March are piping loud,
The snow comes down for hours;
But by and by the April rain
Will bring the sweet May flowers.

The sweet May flowers will deck the mound
Greened in the April rain; —
But blight will lie on our memories,
And our tears will fall in vain!

SONG.

We love in youth, and plight our vows
To love till life departs;
Forgetful of the flight of time,
The change of loving hearts.

To-day departs, to-morrow comes,
Nor finds a weed away;
But no to-morrow finds a man
The man he was to-day.

Then weep no more when love decays,
For even hate is vain;—
Since every heart that hates to-day,
To-morrow loves again.

A PRELUDE.

My desk is heaped with niceties
From tropic lands divine ;
But this is braver far than all,—
A flask of Chian wine!

Brim up my golden drinking-cup,
And reach a dish of fruit,
And then unlock my cabinet,
And hand me out my lute ;

For when these luxuries have fed
And filled my brain with light,
I must compose a nuptial song
To suit my bridal night!

IN THE HAREM.

The scent of burning sandal-wood
Perfumes the air in vain;
A sweeter odor fills my sense,
A fiercer fire my brain!

O, press your burning lips to mine! —
For mine will never part,
Until my heart has rifled all
The sweetness of your heart!

The lutes are playing on the lawn,
The moon is shining bright,
But we like stars are melting now
In clouds of soft delight!

THE ARAB STEED.

My beautiful barb is swift and fleet,
With the speed of thought in his flying feet;
His eyes are large, and full of fire,
His nostrils blown with royal ire;
He pricks his ears at the lightest sound,
Snuffs the air, and paws the ground,
And champs his bit with a foamy mouth,
Looking away to the fiery South!

I leap on his back without saddle or rein;
One pat on his neck, one hand in his mane,
We 're off to the desert so brave and grand,
Outspeeding the pillars of rolling sand.
In dust the drivers and camels fall,
And the whirlwind covers and buries all;
But away in its van we fly like light,
Where the groves are green and the fountains bright.

SONG.

You know the old Hidalgo,
(His box is next to ours,)
Who threw the Prima Donna
The wreath of orange-flowers :
He owns the half of Aragon,
With mines beyond the main ;
A very ancient nobleman,
And gentleman of Spain.

They swear that I must wed him,
In spite of yea or nay,
Though uglier than the Scaramouch,
The spectre in the play ;
But I will sooner die a maid
Than wear a gilded chain,
For all the ancient noblemen
And gentlemen of Spain !

SONG.

The walls of Cadiz front the shore,
And shimmer on the sea:
Her merry maids are beautiful,
But light as light can be.

They drop me billets through the post:
They meet me in the square;
And even follow me to mass,
And lift their veils at prayer.

But all their smiles and wanton arts
Are thrown away on me:
My heart is now an English girl's,
And she is o'er the sea.

My English love is o'er the sea:
But ere a month is flown,
The Spanish maids will be as far,
And she will be my own.

THE TWO BRIDES.

I saw two maids at the kirk,
And both were fair and sweet:
One in her wedding robe,
And one in her winding-sheet.

The choristers sang the hymn,
The sacred rites were read,
And one for life to Life,
And one to Death, was wed.

They were borne to their bridal beds,
In loveliness and bloom;
One in a merry castle,
The other a solemn tomb.

One on the morrow woke
In a world of sin and pain;
But the other was happier far,
And never awoke again!

I SYMPATHIZE with all thy grief,
As though it were my own and more,
For all my loving days are o'er,
While thine still last, though dark and brief.

If any prayer of mine could save
The well-belovèd from her fate,
I would not cease to storm the gate
Of Heaven, till Mercy shut her grave.

But prayers on prayers are all in vain;
The destiny of man is fixed:
The bitter cups of Death are mixed,
And we must drink, and drink again.

All words are idle: words from me
Are doubly so: my soul for years
Has used no other speech than tears:
But these I freely offer thee.

A SERENADE.

THE moon is muffled in a cloud,
That folds the lover's star,
But still beneath thy balcony
I touch my soft guitar.

If thou art waking, Lady dear,
The fairest in the land,
Unbar thy wreathèd lattice now,
And wave thy snowy hand.

She hears me not; her spirit lies
In trances mute and deep; —
But Music turns the golden key
Within the gate of Sleep!

Then let her sleep, and if I fail
To set her spirit free,
My song will mingle in her dream,
And she will dream of me!

The yellow Moon looks slantly down,
Through seaward mists, upon the town ;
And like a mist the moonshine falls
Between the dim and shadowy walls.

I see a crowd in every street,
But cannot hear their falling feet ;
They float like clouds through shade and light,
And seem a portion of the Night.

The ships have lain, for ages fled,
Along the waters, dark and dead ;
The dying waters wash no more
The long, black line of spectral shore.

There is no life on land or sea,
Save in the quiet Moon and me ;
Nor ours is true, but only seems,
Within some dead old world of Dreams !

Along the grassy slope I sit,
  And dream of other years;
My heart is full of soft regrets,
  Mine eyes of tender tears!

The wild bees hummed about the spot,
  The sheep-bells tinkled far,
Last year when Alice sat with me,
  Beneath the evening star!

The same sweet star is o'er me now,
  Around, the same soft hours,
But Alice moulders in the dust
  With all the last year's flowers!

I sit alone, and only hear
  The wild bees on the steep,
And distant bells that seem to float
  From out the folds of Sleep!

SUMMER.

The Summer-time has come again,
With all its light and mirth,
And June leads on the laughing Hours,
To bless the weary Earth.

The sunshine lies along the street,
So dim and cold before,
And in the open window creeps,
And slumbers on the floor.

The country was so fresh and fine
And beautiful in May,
It must be more than beautiful, —
A Paradise to-day!

If I were only there again,
I 'd seek the lanes apart,
And shout aloud in mighty woods,
To ease my happy heart!

But prisoned here with flat brick walls,
I sit alone and sigh;
My only glimpse of Summer near,
A strip of cloudy sky.

TO A NIGHTINGALE.

"King Pandion he is dead;
And thy friends are lapped in lead."

Awake, thou melancholy bird,
Thy tale of ancient wrong,
For every shepherd's heart is stirred
To hear the solemn song.

From woods of Thrace in autumn hours,
No longer there to rest,
Thou cam'st into our western bowers,
To build awhile thy nest.

The swallow lagged behind thy flight,
Nor yet has shown her wing,
Though skies are soft and full of light,
And groves are green with Spring.

But vain are skies and groves to thee,
  Whose days of joy are fled;
And vain the swallow o'er the sea
  To all the lost, and dead!

Yet wake, thou mournful bird, again;
  Again thy woe impart,
And every heart that hears thy strain
  Will grow a kindred heart.

TO B. T.

Though Youth is fresh upon us, we are squires
Of Poesy, and swell her shining train,
With all the belted knights, whose prowess fires
Our hearts to do what noble deeds remain;
The golden spurs are ours ere many days
If we are true; then let us join our hands,
And knit our souls in Friendship's holy bands,
To help each other in the coming frays.
Envy and hate are for the low and mean:
We will be noble rivals, oftentime
Crossing our spears in tournaments of rhyme,
In friendly tilts to glorify our Queen;
Friendly to all save caitiffs foul and wrong,
But stern to guard the Holy Land of Song!

The Sun pursues his starry round in space,
Alone in light, but not alone in love;
For inhis train the Moon doth climb above,
And turn to him her meek and patient face:
Alone in strength the forest cedar towers,
But not alone in love, by love embraced;
The vine upsprings and clings about his waist,
And at his feet do grow a thousand flowers:
Nor are the flowers — though none their sweets repay
With kindred sweets — alone; the summer breeze
Hangs round their lips, while troops of loving bees
Lie on their hearts and sigh their souls away:
Why then should I, though none may answer me
With equal love, O Love, despair of thee?

TO W. J. R.

WITH A MANUSCRIPT.

A COMMON weed, a pebble, or a shell
From the waste margent of a classic sea,
A flower that grew where some great empire fell,
Worthless themselves, are rich in memory ;
So these frail lines are precious, since the hand
That shaped their calm precision wastes in mould,
And the hot brain that kindled them is cold
In its own ashes, like a blackened brand ;
But where the fiery Spirit of the spell ?
Weeping with trailing wings beside his tomb ?
Or scowling down the ministers of doom,
That torture him upon the racks of Hell ?
To bigots leave their self-created gloom,
Not this is Nature's creed, but — All is well !

THE GAME OF CHESS.

We played at chess, Bianca and myself,
One afternoon, but neither won the game.
Both absent-minded, thinking of our hearts,
Moving the ivory pawns from black to white,
Shifted to little purpose round the board;
Sometimes we quite forgot them in a sigh,
And then remembered it, and moved again;
Looking the while along the slopes beyond,
Barred by blue peaks, the fountain, and the grove
Where lovers sat in shadow, back again,
With sideway glances in each other's eyes;
Unknowingly I made a lucky move,
Whereby I checked my mate, and gained a queen;
My couch drew nearer hers, I took her hand, —
A soft white hand that gave itself away, —
Told o'er the simple story of my love,

In simplest phrases, which are always best,
And prayed her, if she loved me in return, —
A fabled doubt, — to give her heart to me ;
And then, and there, above that game of chess,
Not finished yet, in maiden trustfulness —
I 'm coming, Sweet! — she gave her heart to me!

FROM A PLAY.

Alas! I think of you the livelong day,
Plying my needle by the little stand,
And wish that we had never, never met,
Or I were dead, or you were married off —
Though that would kill me ; I lay down my work,
And take the lute you gave me, but the strings
Have grown so tuneless that I cannot play ;
I sing the favorite airs we used to sing,
The sweet old tunes we loved, and weep aloud !
I sought forgetfulness, and tried to-day
To read a chapter in the Holy Book ;
I could not see a line, I only read
The solemn sonnets that you sent to me :
Nor can I pray as I was wont to do,
For you come in between me and the Lord,
And when I strive to lift my soul above,

My wits are wandering, and I sob your name !
And nights, when I am lying on my bed,
(I hope such thoughts are not unmaidenly !)
I think of you, and fall asleep, and dream
I am your own, your wedded, happy wife,—
But that can never, never be on earth !

THE END.

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